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THE LAWRENCE STRIKE OF OCTOBER, 1931

BY JOHN BRUCE MCPHERSON

SINCE 1912 Lawrence, one of the largest, if not the largest, center of the worsted manufacture in this country, has been more exploited by leaders of radical labor movements than any similar center in the United States. With more than 20,000 mill workers, mostly unorganized, Lawrence was (and still is) an attractive place for magnetic, radical leaders, because of many racial groups easily excited by skillful talkers to "start something" and a place where it is easy to gain a following after a strike is started.

In 1912 the spectacular strike was against any reduction of wages when the statute, enacted at the request of organized labor, reducing the weekly hours of labor from 56 to 54, went into effect in January of that year.

In 1919, when manufacturers granted the request of the American Federation of Labor to reduce the hours from 54 to 48, it was made plain that the striking off of six hours would carry with it a proportionate reduction in wages. This was accepted by vote in some mills, and yet radicals demanding the shorter week without reduction, brought on a strike to enforce the same payment for the shorter as for the longer week.

In February, 1931 the strike was against the introduction of efficiency men into the mills and the establishment of changes they recommended.

In October, 1931 the strike was against a wage cut of 10 per cent, of which notice had been reluctantly given.

WAGE ADVANCES MADE IN THE WOOL TEXTILE INDUSTRY

From January 1, 1916, at which time the effects of the European war were beginning favorably to affect the country's industries, until the close of the war, wages of wool-textile workers were advanced to keep in harmony with the increasing cost of living. In 1916 three increases of 5, 10 and 10 per cent brought the wage rate 27 per cent above 1913. Two increases in 1918 brought it to 78 per cent above 1913; two in 1919 increased it to 104 per cent above, and one in May, 1920 raised it to 165 per cent above 1913.

In 1920 came a sudden and unexpected deflation of wool which almost prostrated the wool manufacture, and in January, 1921 there was a reduction of $22\frac{1}{2}$ per cent, leaving the rate 105 per cent above the base of 1913. An upturn in 1923, when the first half of the year showed a heavy consumption of combing and clothing wools and activity of looms, cards and spindles much above normal, brought a $12\frac{1}{2}$ per cent increase, carrying the rate 131 per cent above the base. Notwithstanding a great drop in consumption of wool in the last half of 1923 and nearly 30 per cent smaller than normal consumption in the last half of 1924, this was continued until July 27, 1927, when a reduction of 10 per cent was made, bringing the rate to 108 above the base of 1913. The following table shows in detail the increases made and the percentages above the 1913 base.

WAGE INCREASES AND COST OF LIVING

| | <i>Increase or Decrease</i> | <i>In Per Cent of 1913: 100</i> | <i>Cost of Living*</i> |
|------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| January, 1916 | | | |
| April, 1916 | + 5% | 105 | 118.3 |
| December, 1916 | +10% | 116 | 118.3 |
| May, 1917 | +10% | 127 | 118.3 |
| October, 1917 | + 5% | 133 | 142.4 |
| March, 1918 | +10% | 147 | 142.4 |
| June, 1918 | +10% | 162 | 174.4 |
| June, 1919 | +10% | 178 | 174.4 |
| December, 1919 | +15% | 204 | 177.3 |
| May, 1920 | + $12\frac{1}{2}\%$ | 230 | 199.3 |
| January, 1921 | +15% | 265 | 216.5 |
| April 30, 1923 | - $22\frac{1}{2}\%$ | 205 | 180.4 |
| July 27, 1925 | + $12\frac{1}{2}\%$ | 231 | 168.8 |
| October 13, 1931 | -10% | 208 | 173.5 |
| * 100 in 1913. | -10% | 187 | 150.0 |

From 1923 to the present time there was not a single year when the activity of wool machinery as a whole was above normal for any length of time.

In 1924, prices of the capital stocks of wool manufacturing establishments, which had been above the average level of industrial stocks, began a decline that has continued uninterrupted since that year, dropping from \$101 in January, 1924 to \$42 in December, 1928 and almost disappearing in 1931 and 1932.

FALLING COMMODITY MARKETS AND A SPECULATIVE STOCK MARKET

During those years in which the wool manufacture was not sharing in the booming times and the great activity of other industries, there was the anomaly of falling commodity markets, a rising stock market for securities and seemingly prosperous years for other industries. In the decade from 1920 to 1930, 1923 was the only year in which the wool manufacture showed a markedly greater machinery activity than normal. Wool consumption was greatest in 1922 and in the first half of 1923. During those years violent drops in prices for basic raw materials were also occurring which greatly reduced the purchasing power of one quarter of our population who produced these goods. This purchasing power was cut in two and that caused the disappearance of one-eighth of the demand for finished articles. This adversely affected the income of those engaged in manufacturing, transporting and selling of such goods. The census of 1930 showed that 27,500,000 people were so engaged. Millions of workers were without employment and there was a further reduction of demand for goods at old prices.

Constant decrease in the value of wool continued during those years, causing heavy losses to all big companies compelled to carry large stocks of wool and products. In 1923 the American Woolen Company's surplus stood at \$33,576,725; in 1931 there was a deficit of \$17,738,679. The Arlington and the Pacific mills suffered proportionately heavy losses.

Taxes were most burdensome; assessment valuations of war times were being continued in peace and deflation times. Taxes in Lawrence amounted to more than 4 cents (a handsome profit) on each yard of product manufactured. In 1931 the American

Woolen Company paid in taxes to Lawrence \$470,362; the Pacific Mills, \$335,345 and the Arlington Mills, \$193,402.

The goods markets were in a demoralized condition much of the time and over-zealous manufacturers, anxious to keep their machinery running, yielded to pressure and cut prices which helped to make a bad situation worse and profits impossible. Smaller mills which could more easily shift their products and produce at lower cost in smaller places, because of lower overhead costs and lower taxation, were keen competitors of the larger mills built for mass production of plain fabrics, and fancies were in chief demand. This competition would not have been so harmful in times of activity; but when demand was greatly restricted it was a menace to the big mills.

WAGE REDUCTIONS WERE NOT PROMPTLY APPLIED

The retail trade was slow to reduce clothing prices to the people with incomes greatly restricted and the remedy, usually effective in former depressions — reduction of wages in harmony with decreased cost of living — was not promptly applied.

When the great speculative period with its fictitious values came to an end in the autumn of 1929, few suspected the widespread character of the movement or that this country would be shaken to its very foundations. In fact, many believed that recovery would begin in a year or two. At the President's conference shortly after the break the great employers of labor promised to maintain wages, believing that by so doing recovery might be hastened.

DESPITE HEAVY LOSSES WOOL MANUFACTURERS KEPT WAGES HIGH

At that meeting wool manufacturers were present, though not parties to the agreement; but despite discouragements and difficulties rarely experienced, they continued from 1925 to October 13, 1931 to maintain the wage rate established in July of the former year. With their yearly statements usually in red, and with business conditions growing worse rather than better, they were forced to consider in the autumn of last year after the employes of the Amoskeag Mills voted to accept a 10 per cent cut, whether or not they could continue the wages then in force in Lawrence. The United States Steel Company had put into

effect a cut of 10 per cent, as had the Bethlehem Steel Company, without objection from their workers. Workers in the Assabet Mills in Maynard, Massachusetts, members of the United Textile Workers of America, had also accepted a cut of $12\frac{1}{2}$ per cent with the approval of President McMahon of the United Textile Workers of America.

In past depressions a reduction in dollar wage scales to a point no greater than the percentage decline in the cost of living was sufficient to bring about the adjustment without lowering real wages, and in such depressions readjustments were well under way within six months after the decline in production had gained a good start.

WAGE READJUSTMENTS NOT MADE UNTIL MILLIONS WERE JOBLESS

But in this depression, because of the tenacity with which the high wage theory was held, important wage readjustments, much delayed, only began about two years after the decline in production had become pronounced and many millions were out of work. Meanwhile, the cost of living for commodities purchased by a working man and his family had within those two years dropped, according to the Department of Labor, 12.8 per cent, and according to the National Industrial Conference Board, 15 per cent with the precise percentage perhaps somewhere between the two. Because of this decrease, the workers, receiving old rates of wages, in reality had received an increase, and a worker accepting a cut of 10 per cent would have been in a position to maintain the same standard of living that he did before it.

The postponement of the cut for two years showed that manufacturers were reluctant to reduce wages; but they discovered in those years that there was a limit to the time that wages could be maintained in a falling market and that the limit had been reached. The manufacturer had seen his profits disappear; the investor had seen his dividends greatly reduced or passed and his capital nearly wiped out. All these had taken their cuts and their purchasing power, which had been reduced, made necessary marked changes in their standards of living.

WOOL CONSUMPTION WAS FAR BELOW NORMAL

During the first six months of 1930 the consumption of combing and clothing wools had been as little as 8 and as much as 18 per cent below normal, and for the last six months of that year it was about 30 per cent below normal. For the first three months of 1931 the depression continued, but with a rising consumption until July, when it was about 34 per cent above normal. Then came a precipitous decline until at the close of the year it was more than 25 per cent below normal. In 1931, when wool merchants were trying to sell wool in the form of tops, the spurt was confined largely to tops and to worsted yarns. Reports showed a decrease in wool consumption of 6 per cent in August from the July figures; the September figures were 18 per cent below those of August and October figures were 15 per cent lower than those for September.

Harassed by many disconcerting factors and because of these unfavorable statistics the Lawrence manufacturers who had endeavored to avoid a wage cut, could see no way after the action taken by the Amoskeag Manufacturing Company in September in putting into effect a 10 per cent cut, to continue to give better than fitful employment to their employes, unless they accepted a cut of 10 per cent in wages, which were then 87 per cent above the basic level of 1913. Officials of at least one mill had explained to their superintendents, assistant superintendents and overseers the necessity of this move if the industry was to continue, and met with the Citizens Committee on September 25 to whom they made a full statement of their difficulties and showed the necessity of reducing production costs.

These disclosures were thought to have made a favorable impression on the Committee and it was hoped that employes would coöperate with the manufacturers in the emergency. Unfortunately, the meeting with the Citizens Committee had hardly adjourned before a premature announcement was made in Lawrence papers of the contemplated action.

ORGANIZATION AGAINST A WAGE REDUCTION

Immediately preparations were made to organize the workers against it. For several previous months representatives of the

United Textile Workers of America had been "conducting an organization campaign in Lawrence."

Robert J. Watt, president of the Lawrence Central Labor Union and secretary of the State Branch of the American Federation of Labor, in examining the industrial field in the Commonwealth some months earlier, convinced himself that a reduction of wages in the wool-textile industry would be attempted and that it would be tried out in Lawrence. Some weeks before its actual occurrence, he and President McMahon and Vice-President Gorman of the United Textile Workers had a conference with the Lawrence Citizens Committee over the possibility of a wage cut.

COMMUNISTS WERE PLANNING TO BRING ON A STRIKE

The radical element which always has its small, militant nucleus in Lawrence, was also on the alert for an opportunity to bring on a strike. In the September issue of *Espionage* it was stated that "a strike in Lawrence will be called if Communists can bring such a thing to pass" and that "orders to institute such a strike have been issued by the Central Control Committee of the Communistic Party at New York. They provide for an intensive campaign to culminate in a strike not later than October 13."

The interval gave time for discussion and organization, and steps were immediately taken to oppose the cut. President Watt of the Central Labor Union was quoted¹ as having announced that the textile workers would have the support of 5,000 other workers in the city affiliated with the American Federation of Labor, and later² as having told the strikers in an address on the Common that "we are all with you; we will carry on this strike and we will make it possible for the thousands of men and women of Lawrence to get food and fuel to take them through the winter, if that is necessary. We're prepared to do that and in all spirit of fairness I ask your coöperation, and I sincerely appeal for your confidence."

Meanwhile, Edith Berkman, an organizer for the National Textile Workers, the Communist body, who was facing deportation, announced that her organization would oppose the cut and would organize a general strike against it.

¹ *Boston Post*, September 28.

² *Lawrence Daily Eagle*, October 8.

A CONFERENCE WITH EMPLOYERS ASKED
BY CITIZENS COMMITTEE

On September 29, the Citizens Committee met representatives of Local 1718, United Textile Workers of America, who requested them, if possible, to arrange a conference between the employers and the employes. The Committee sent telegrams to representatives of all the mills urging a conference to reach a solution. Statements issued by the Central Labor Union and the executive council of the workers urged that an opportunity be provided for the workers to discuss the problem, and if no settlement could be reached by the conference, to give the workers an opportunity to vote on the cut. But this proposed conference was ridiculed by Anne Burlak and Edith Berkman of the Communistic organization, who proposed the slogan, "Not a Penny from Our Pay."

To this invitation the employers replied on September 30, that they were carrying on conferences with their employes and pending their completion they could see no advantage in complying with the request, an answer which was regarded by Organizer Riviere of the United Textile Workers as a "joke and a preamble to serious trouble."

A difficulty in reaching a basis for continued operation was the opposite views held by the two sides. The manufacturers knew that rivals with lower production costs were getting the little business available and if the heavy losses experienced for some years were to be obviated their production costs, of which labor was then, because of the much lower prices for wool, a greater proportion of the cost than it formerly was, would have to be reduced by a wage cut. On the other hand, the American Federation of Labor was strongly opposed to a reduction of wages.

LABOR'S PURPOSE WAS TO STOP ALL WAGE REDUCTIONS

A statement issued by the Central Labor Union after a meeting with the Citizens Committee late in September showed that Labor's purpose was to stop all reductions. The statement then was that "if we can stem the tide of wage-cutting for ourselves in Lawrence, we shall undoubtedly be doing it for the rest of the state," this proposed cut being regarded as "the signal for even

greater slashing of wages throughout Massachusetts, if not New England and the rest of the nation in the textile industry."

A newspaper statement on September 28 announced that "mill workers stood shoulder to shoulder in an unanimous appeal to the American Federation of Labor to organize against reduction," and they were assured by Organizer Riviere of the United Textile Workers of America, affiliated with the American Federation of Labor, that they would "get the full support of that great labor body."

The *American* of October 1 stated that "at meetings workers resented all intimations of a compromise with mill owners. . . . Organized workers are determined to fight against any cut whatsoever."

President McMahon of the United Textile Workers wrote in *The Textile Worker* for October that "no employer can produce reasonable evidence to show the necessity for reducing wages of workers under present living conditions."

"The workers resented," the statement of the Central Labor Union said, "very keenly the method employed to notify the workers of the cut — [a premature] publication in the public press."

Almost immediately the National Textile Workers, the Communistic body, announced that "the United Textile Workers of America do not represent the workers."

STRIKE SENTIMENT WAS DEVELOPING

Meanwhile sentiment for a strike had been expressed at three meetings held September 30, a strike being forecast at a meeting of the American Textile Workers Union, Inc., made up of employes of the Pacific Mills, when President Dawson declared that "the immediate prospects cannot be regarded without apprehension. We think that the 10 per cent cut is not justified and the corporation cannot explain any sound reason other than the statement that other type industries are reducing wages and we must do likewise."

At a meeting held October 1, Vice-President Gorman of the United Textile Workers of America declared he was convinced that "there would be a strike unless the reduction is withdrawn." If it should occur on October 13, he predicted that

former strikes would "fade into insignificance." He made the following proposals:

1. Withdrawal of the proposed cut.
2. Both sides submit to the Citizens Committee their claims and allow that body to pass on the merits of the two cases. Convinced that there would be a strike unless the proposed reduction was withdrawn, he suggested also that all workers be given an opportunity to vote. . . . A question of right or wrong is involved and this, he thought, could be determined by both sides agreeing to submit the question to a neutral group.

Four groups were involved — the manufacturers, members of the United Textile Workers, the American Textile Workers Union, Inc., and the National Textile Workers, the Communistic organization. Had the first three voted for submission to the Citizens Committee, it would have been futile, inasmuch as the last named would not coöperate with the others and were trying to thwart their every move. It seemed, therefore, that Mr. Gorman's proposal, if accepted, would not bring the peace desired.

LABOR LEADERS EARLY CONFERRED WITH GOVERNOR ELY

On September 29 President Watt of the Central Labor Union, President McMahon and Vice-President Gorman of the United Textile Workers, who were in Boston "on a mission of peace," conferred with Governor Ely who, if the employers refused to meet the employes to discuss the cut, it was understood, would give all assistance in his power to help prevent a strike and that if the plan for a conference was rejected, the State Board would be sent to make a survey and place the blame where it belonged.¹

This entrance of the governor into the dispute before an actual strike was regarded as an omen that Lawrence would not have another one and that it would bring a settlement within a few weeks.

Unfortunately, the bodies represented by Mr. Watt and his colleagues were not relatively strong at the time among the workers and an agreement with their representatives would not necessarily have meant peace, inasmuch as the National Textile Workers Union (Communist) was opposed to any conference and its plans had been made to start a strike as soon as notices of the cut were posted. It did not appear, therefore, that a con-

¹ *Lawrence Daily Eagle*, September 30.

ference without considering the latter union could produce the result expected by its proponents.

On October 2, officials of the American Textile Workers Union, Inc., who had written to Governor Ely to ask him to intercede, made public his reply that "it is inconceivable to me that those who speak for the mill owners should refuse to confer and I trust that your organization will find it agreeable to approve the conference."

MANUFACTURERS' STATEMENT GAVE REASONS FOR WAGE CUT

That same day after a long conference with the Citizens Committee, the manufacturers held to their position that reductions must go into effect on October 13. In a statement signed by representatives of the American Woolen Company, the Pacific, and Arlington mills, to employes and citizens they said:

The management of the mills has maintained its wage rates in Lawrence in the face of declining commodity prices and wage rates throughout the country.

Despite the fact that the mills have felt keen competition from manufacturing centers outside of Lawrence where wages have been reduced during the past twelve months, we have still endeavored to market our products made in Lawrence at competitive prices with those quoted from communities where wage rates have been reduced. This effort has entailed substantial financial losses to the mills and their stockholders, as well as to our employes through lack of continuous employment.

Finding ourselves unable to successfully meet this lower wage competition and longer working hours outside the State of Massachusetts, we are faced with the alternative of adjusting wage rates or greatly curtailing, if not wholly eliminating, the sale of our products made in Lawrence.

With the idea that it is much better for the community of Lawrence to maintain as large a percentage of mill operation as possible, and rather than have unemployment for thousands of people, we are forced to announce an adjustment of wages downward of 10 per cent, effective Tuesday, October 13, 1931.

While we exceedingly regret the necessity for this step, we believe that it is for the best interests of our employes and the community of Lawrence.

This reaffirmed the known position of the manufacturers, but it was the first public announcement of the pending reduction and their first public explanation of the reasons for it. In addi-

tion to the statement, a list of places in which mills had already made readjustments was given as follows:

Holyoke, February, 12½ per cent; Lowell, 10 per cent; Farnumsville and Watertown, 12½ per cent; East Brookfield, January, 17 per cent and in June, 8½ per cent; Canton, September, 10 per cent; Uxbridge, March, 10 per cent; Franklin, November 5, 15 per cent; East Douglas, September, 7 per cent; Bellingham, October, 10 per cent, and December, 10½ per cent; Maynard, December, 12½ per cent; North Smithfield, February, 12½ per cent; Providence, two cuts in December of 12½ per cent; North Smithfield, Manton, December, 12½ per cent; Old Town, December and July, 12½ per cent each; Manchester, N. H., September, 10 per cent, and Woonsocket, December to February, 12½ and 15 per cent.

After the statement was issued a manufacturer was quoted as saying that 40 per cent of the cost of the finished fabrics represented labor cost and that most manufacturers in Massachusetts and New England outside of Lawrence were manufacturing at a cost of from 5 to 10 cents a yard less than those in Lawrence.

A reply to the manufacturers' statement was made by Vice-President Gorman of the United Textile Workers, who claimed that the mills named must be shown to be competitors of the Lawrence mills and a base provided for comparative conditions. He contended also that as to hours of labor there was no disadvantage to the Lawrence manufacturers and that their statement was "an endorsement of the union's position that all the facts should be assembled." He urged that all the workers be given an opportunity to vote on the question without intimidation and expressed a willingness to abide by the decision, the union being willing to leave its case in the hands of the Citizens Committee, and he asked, "Will the mills do the same?"

The statement signed by President Watt, Organizer Riviere, and President Dawson of the American Textile Workers Union, Inc., recommended that employers agree to refer the question to a vote of the workers, to be taken at the City Hall under the auspices of the Citizens Committee. They were willing "to leave their case in the hands of an enlightened public opinion, which, no doubt, will, in the last analysis, render the verdict."

This question of comparative wages was much discussed dur-

ing the strike, the contention of the strikers being that wages paid in other places exceeded those paid in Lawrence, citing Passaic, New Jersey, and one mill in Rhode Island, and that, therefore, Lawrence mills were not at a disadvantage and could afford to carry on without the cut.

The figures used in some cases by the strike officials were those taken from pay envelopes which represented pay for very short time, instead of those received under a full time schedule. Those which created the most discussion were printed in the *Boston News Bureau* which purported to show the rates in Lawrence, New Hampshire and Rhode Island as follows:

| Job | Lawrence Cents | New Hampshire Cents | Rhode Island Cents |
|------------------|-------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| Card Strippers | 44.5 | 29.0 | 42.0 |
| Comb Tenders | 44.0 | 25.0 | 29.0 |
| Gill Box Tenders | 34.0 | 23.0 | 26.0 |
| Spinners | 38.0 | 23.0 | 28.0 |
| Doffers | 36.0 | 21.0 | 24.0 |
| Dyehouse Hands | 41.0 | 32.0 | 36.0 |
| General Labor | 41.0 | 33.0 | 36.0 |

ACTIVITIES OF COMMUNISTIC LEADERS HALTED BY THEIR ARREST

On October 7 steps were taken to get rid of the Red leaders by arresting Edith Berkman, who was prominent in the February strike, for speaking without a permit, and she was summoned into the United States Circuit Court to show cause why her bail bond of \$2,000 should not be revoked.

A committee went to Boston to ask for the cancellation of William T. Murdoch's bond of \$5,000 because of violation of its conditions and if not cancelled, to ask for an order restraining his activities.

ANOTHER STATEMENT BY THE MANUFACTURERS

On that same date the manufacturers issued the following statement to show how the stockholders had lost their dividends and how the mills had depleted their surplus accounts:

There is a phase of this textile controversy that should not be lost sight of in considering the justifiability of the proposed wage reduction. In all fairness, the interest of the stockholders, the actual owners of the mills, deserves some recognition.

These stockholders, a great many of whom live in Lawrence and are operatives in the mills here, number 30,000. For several

years they have not received a penny return on their investment, and besides have suffered a severe depreciation of their capital, as much as 75 per cent. We might add that this depreciation has not been effected by the general slump in the stock market; it came about rather through a steady decline in the textile business and the growing difficulty of the Lawrence mills in meeting ruinous competition from other mills whose wage scales are lower and in some instances have longer working hours.

For example: The American Woolen Company (including the Wood, Ayer, Washington, Prospect and Shawsheen Mills) had net losses in 1928, \$1,262,264; 1929, \$4,228,191; 1930, \$4,897,585. In that period the surplus of this company has shrunk from \$13,913,161 in 1928 to \$9,684,970 in 1929, and to \$4,787,386 in 1930. For the first six months of 1931 the net loss was \$1,675,221. The Pacific Mills had a net loss of \$600,751 in 1928, a net profit of \$1,031,168 in 1929, and a net loss of \$2,417,887 in 1930. For the first six months of 1931 the Pacific had a net loss of \$696,050. The surplus of this corporation was \$4,573,218 in 1928, which increased to \$5,535,742 in 1929, and then shrank to \$3,261,333 in 1930. At the end of the first six months of 1931 this surplus was reduced to \$2,565,282. The Arlington reported net losses in 1928 of \$180,965; 1929, of \$783,487; 1930, of \$1,722,502. Its surplus shrank from \$6,137,165 in 1928 to \$5,353,678 in 1929 and to \$3,631,176 in 1930.

If any operative wishes to check up on these figures he might go to any bank and consult the corporation reports used for reference by the banker.

We wish our employes to consider these facts in determining the justifiability of the proposed wage reduction. They should not be ignored, if the final decision is to be a just one.

In the face of these growing deficits and dwindling surpluses we have maintained our wage scale at a much higher level than has been paid by our competitors in the hope that improving conditions would eventually justify our reluctance to cut wages. We did this notwithstanding that textile plants elsewhere had been reducing the pay of their operatives.

We invite a comparison of the wages to be paid in Lawrence after the proposed ten per cent reduction with those paid in the industry outside of this city. You will still find wages here on a higher level.

In the adjustment of wages we are trying to avoid a situation which would be ruinous to the textile industry of Lawrence. Unless our operatives coöperate with us, how are we going to battle through this depression from which the whole world is suffering? Surely, no right-thinking person in this community wants to see our mills closed down indefinitely.

We might conclude that there is no discrimination in this cut. It is from the top to the bottom, taking in executives and salary employes as well as operatives.

A TEXTILE JOURNAL'S STATEMENT ABOUT
LAWRENCE WAGES

An editorial in a textile journal¹ stated that Lawrence was "20 to 40 per cent higher in wages than the country districts" and that "the possibilities of profit-making on worsted production in that city are extremely limited, not only because of the high wages, but because of the limited production of the operatives themselves as compared with production figures in country mills. Other towns than Lawrence not only put fewer dollars per week into the pay envelope, they also work more hours per week with a larger individual production. . . . There is nothing in Lawrence that will allow the operatives in that city to enjoy higher wages than the operatives of any other woolen and worsted mills in the world. If Lawrence is going to continue in operation, the wage costs have got to come down. Practically every industry in the country has cut wages and the woolen and worsted mill operatives cannot maintain a position that is adverse to all other wage earners of the country."

Two weeks later the same paper discussing the strike said: "The mills in Lawrence cannot continue to pay the wages they have been maintaining for years. A 10 per cent cut was not enough to compete with other mills. The cut in actual wage costs will have to be 25 per cent." Comparative rates paid in Providence, Rhode Island and Lawrence, the former rates being from "the best and most successful worsted mill in Providence," were given to show the disadvantage under which Lawrence was working. The Providence rates were stated to be at least 10 per cent higher than in those country worsted mills that were then making a profit. The figures were:

¹ *American Wool & Cotton Reporter*, October 1.

| <i>Job</i> | <i>Providence, R. I.</i> <i>Rate of Pay</i> | <i>Lawrence</i> <i>Rate of Pay</i> |
|-------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| Wool sorter..... | \$24.00 | \$36-\$38 |
| Card room..... | 14.80 | 18.50 |
| 3 Gill boxes..... | 14.05 | 18.50 |
| 3 Combs..... | 18.50 | 23.85 |
| Drawing..... | 14.05 | 18.10 |
| Spinning 4 sides..... | 15.50 | 22.05 |
| Doffers..... | 9.80 | |
| No. 60 Universal Winders..... | 20-22 | 13.00 |
| No. 90 Universal Winders..... | 13.00 | 20-22 |
| Slasher tenders..... | 30.40 | 18-24 |
| Weavers, 6 looms..... | 28-30 | 38-40 |
| Loom fixers..... | 34.50 | *30-32 |
| Sewers..... | 20-24 | *39.95 |
| Finishing: | | 28-34 |
| Wet finish..... | 19.80 | 26-28 |
| Shear tenders..... | 19.80 | 28-34 |
| Pressers..... | 19.80 | 24-28 |
| Finished perchers..... | 21.00 | 34.50 |

* Bonus.

Commenting on this table, the editorial pointed out that its figures, which were authentic, showed that Lawrence wages were in some instances 50 per cent higher or more and that "conditions since the days when Lawrence dominated the worsted manufacture and the rest of the country was producing carded woolens, have radically changed. Many worsted mills now scattered throughout the textile territory are successfully making French spun worsteds, the lighter fabrics in keen demand. Smaller mills are well able to carry on this manufacture. When staples were in demand, Lawrence might have been able to pay wages 10 or 15 per cent higher than outlying places, but it is no longer true. Actually, the 10 per cent revision of wages will still leave Lawrence very much higher in wage scales than other towns. Radically higher than Providence, and Providence is not low, wages in Lawrence are probably 25 per cent higher than in the country mills that are furnishing the competition."

The contention of the labor leaders was that higher wages were paid at points in New England and also in other states.

Passaic wages were quoted as higher than those in Lawrence, but it was not shown that the mills paying them were making money and could afford to do so, neither was it generally known that the Rhode Island mills cited were running with three shifts, or continuously for 24 hours each day, nor the number of combs each employe tended.

CONTINUED EFFORT MADE FOR CONFERENCES

On October 4 at a meeting of the United Textile Workers and the American Textile Workers, Inc., with the Citizens Committee, statements by workers were made and it was voted to arrange, if possible, a meeting at the earliest possible moment with the manufacturers. President Watt and Organizer Riviere then suggested that they and Vice-President Gorman would take themselves out of the picture if the employers would meet with the delegates chosen by the workers, former demands being modified, and the Citizens Committee was asked to prevail upon manufacturers to discuss the situation with the workers or mill by mill instead of collectively, as formerly demanded. This aroused hope that the dispute would be settled.

Edith Berkman announced that she would not allow members of her organization to attend such a conference, which was in keeping with the policy of her organization always to oppose the American Federation of Labor and the employers.

The next day a statement issued by President Watt and Organizer Riviere suggested that manufacturers discuss with their own employes declining commodity rates, competition from other manufacturing centers, longer working hours, salaries, capitalization, etc. In case of failure it was suggested that the question be referred to a vote of the workers, who were on record as opposing a cut.

STRIKE STARTED BY SMALL GROUP IN WOOD MILL

On the morning of October 5 individual notices of the cut which was to become effective October 13 were distributed to the workers in the Wood Mill. Shortly after the noon recess trouble was started in its spinning room by a small group who had been instructed to strike in a manner almost identical with that of the 1912 and later strikes when notices were given. By agreement a small group of Communist sympathizers started running from department to department pulling off the belts and shutting off the power, threatening women and calling upon all to leave the mill. They raced through the Ayer Mill in a similar way, intimidating workers and stopping them where they could. They made an attempt on the Washington Mills, but it was emptied before they were met at the mill gates by policemen and dispersed.

Mills opened the next morning, but so few workers appeared that no work could be accomplished and by that evening or the next day nearly all the mills were closed and more than 20,000 workers were willing or unwilling participants in the most widespread strike since 1912.

Edith Berkman claimed credit for the strike and claimed leadership of the strikers outside of the Arlington Mills, while the United Textile Workers claimed "the crowd was following them." Local sentiment was strong against the radicals and a blanket permit to hold meetings on the Common was given to the United Textile Workers, action which left the radicals with no place to meet their followers except an open, vacant lot.

On October 8 Chairman Fisher of the State Board of Conciliation and Arbitration held a conference in Boston with representatives of most of the mills involved. A few days later President Watt announced that the chairman of the State Board of Conciliation and Arbitration, having had conferences with the employers, desired to confer with the committee representing organizations of the employes and asked him to arrange a meeting at the earliest possible date at the office of the Board. Because of this action of the Board's chairman, an arbitration of the dispute was expected by some. The Communistic body, however, refused to have anything to do with the State Board, announcing that they would send a delegation to Boston to demand that it keep its hands off.

The first week, during which efforts were made to enroll many members in the union, ended with little prospect of immediate settlement, optimism created by the removal of the radical leaders from the picture and the move of the State Board having been dissipated by a statement that the American Woolen Company would make no compromise and a rejoinder from President Watt that "the workers would fight it out to the bitter end."

On October 10, the manufacturers issued a statement as follows:

Outside of those located in Lawrence practically all the textile mills in New England manufacturing wool have already reduced wages. This movement began nearly a year ago with mills in various cities in Massachusetts and with others in Rhode Island and Connecticut. The movement has continued during the

past year, but up to the present time the mills located in Lawrence have not made any adjustments of wages or salaries. With the lower prices prevailing on wool, labor is now a very much larger percentage of the total cost than at any time in a great many years. This indicates that a change in wage costs means much more than previously. Other mills in New England which are direct competitors of those in Lawrence now have an advantage of from 5 to 10 cents a yard, depending upon the value of the goods. It has now come to a point where the mills in Lawrence cannot meet this situation unless labor costs are adjusted. The mills are therefore planning to make an adjustment of about 10 per cent which is really not enough as many mills in New England are on a wage scale of 20 to 25 per cent below that now prevailing in Lawrence. The mills located in other cities in Massachusetts and other points in New England are now able to sell their goods and make a profit, where the mills in Lawrence can scarcely come out whole, and, as a matter of fact, are making losses.

In addition to the difference in labor costs, the mills in Massachusetts can run but 48 hours per week, where women and minors are employed. Many of our competitors in Rhode Island and other states are operating day and night in some instances, three shifts. This enables them to reduce their overhead materially and gives them a still further advantage on the market.

Lawrence has put off from month to month any attempt to bring itself into line with these competitors, but it now finds itself in the position where some action must be taken or the mills will gradually lose the business and there will be no wages at all. The matter is perfectly clear and ought to be understood by the people.

GOVERNOR ELY'S LETTER TO MANUFACTURERS

On October 14, labor leaders discussed with Governor Ely his proposal to end the strike, and two days later, after manufacturers had announced the establishment of a minimum wage of \$18 for men in general labor, he addressed a letter to the manufacturers in which he said in part:

If we were not at low ebb industrially, I would not consider a suggestion for the settlement of existing difficulties which did not contemplate an arbitration of wages. . . . I like to think that out of the present strenuous times all of us may learn something of advantage for future conduct. I should hope that industry thoroughly realizes the necessity both from a humanitarian and economic viewpoint of sharing the profit by a suitable increase in the wages of employes as conditions improve and

reasonable profits become possible. It seems to me that if you express agreement with this humanitarian and economic fact and assure your employes that their desire for better wages will be so considered in the future, then the unhappy difficulties that now exist will be remedied.

I think that you should continue to confer with representatives of the workers in your factory to be chosen by them for a full discussion of these matters.

If his suggestions were favorably acted upon by all concerned and the employes return to work, he wrote that he would be "glad to consider the appointment of a commission for a general survey of wage conditions in the textile industry to the end that a stabilization of base wage rates and working conditions may be established, and he would expect the commission to have access to the companies' books and records." He felt sure that "you and your employes will continue discussion of the situation along the terms outlined herein."

Later Representative Meehan of Lawrence told the strikers that the governor's letter was misinterpreted; that he did not want strikers to accept the 10 per cent cut and return to work. He simply wished them to confer — the mills to be closed meanwhile — then to return if acceptable terms were reached. His idea was to assist negotiations by appointing a committee to investigate industrial conditions.

Prompt replies accepting the governor's suggestions were made by the Pacific and Arlington mills; but the workers rejecting the proposal stood firmly for rescinding the cut while the proposed survey was being made, and they stipulated that a commission of five members, two chosen from each side and the four to choose the fifth member, should be set up and upon acceptance of the plan the workers would agree to go back to work immediately. It was the failure of the governor to suggest rescinding the cut which caused his suggestion to be rejected at a mass meeting following an all-day conference of leaders with him, when it was voted not to return to work pending arbitration, except at the old wage scale.

WORKERS KEPT FROM MILLS BY HUGE PICKET LINES

To give the workers an opportunity to return, all the mills were opened on the nineteenth; but solid lines of pickets were at the mill gates and thousands jammed the streets, with the result

A few who returned could not operate the mills. It was a show of strength in the picket lines since the strike began. Young strikers in automobiles threw rocks through windows of homes of strikers suspected of having worked. Politicians were becoming active. Representative Lane of Lawrence filing a resolve with the clerk of the Massachusetts House of Representatives calling for the appointment of an ad hoc special commission of five to investigate the strike. Congressman Connery of Lynn was reported, in case no agreement was reached, to be ready to offer a resolution in Congress calling for a thorough Congressional investigation. On October 19 Governor Ely, in a speech to the Associated Industries of Massachusetts, was quoted as having declared that the trouble would soon be over. Organizer Riviere regarded the governor's suggestion with suspicion, declaring that there was a "joker" in it and Vice-President Gorman was quoted as stating that "the workers have taken a position in favor of withdrawal of the cut and they mean to maintain it."

GOVERNOR ELY SUGGESTED FIVE PER CENT CUT

A few days later, Governor Ely, it was stated by the Boston News Bureau, broached to the manufacturers a temporary 5 instead of the 10 per cent reduction announced, leaving the final scale to be arbitrated by an impartial body; but it was rejected by them because of its impracticability.

On October 20 a wild disturbance occurred at the Arlington Mills when a crowd of six thousand swarmed about the gates of the mill, broke automobile windows and beat a few workers who left the plant.

The governor made no progress in his conciliation and it was reported at the end of the third week that "his chief concern now related to the sentiment of the strikers," reports being current that they had not been permitted to vote on acceptance of the 10 per cent reduction.

The Methuen Public Forum requested the governor to set in motion the machinery for taking a secret ballot of the workers, the imperative need being to have an opportunity for free expression by all mill operatives through the Australian ballot. This was regarded by Vice-President Gorman as joining hands with the employers and an effort to divide the workers.

Despite the efforts of the governor and the State Board, nobody in touch with the situation held out hopes for an early settlement. Strikers rejected the proposal of the Methuen Public Forum unless it was to vote on the question of returning to work at the old or the new schedule. By the twenty-fourth, Vice-President Gorman was quoted as saying that "the strike could be settled in one hour if the employers would meet around a table with the representatives of the workers." The *Sunday Leader* of October 25 stated that "there are those who feel that the days of the strike are numbered," and that the people "are desirous of going back to work."

The strike entered upon its fourth week with each side as determined to fight to the finish as they were at the start. The manufacturers were silent after having, as they thought, made their position clear.

It was believed, according to an editorial in the *Sunday News* of October 25, that more than 85 per cent of the strikers would return on a 5 per cent instead of a 10 per cent reduction.

Two days later the American Woolen Company began to move 96 magazine looms and yarn machinery from the Wood Mill to Utica, New York. Labor leaders threatened to call strikes in other mills of the Company if it continued to move machinery. President Noah declared, however, that work that could not be done in its Lawrence mills would be done in other parts of the country and the machinery needed would be moved to do it.

On October 28 the Pacific Mills announced the dismissal of its entire corps of eighty printers and engravers, the highest skilled and strongest organized of the workers, and the Osgood Mill in North Andover was closed.

The rumor that the workers were ready to return to work under a 5 per cent cut was "spiked" by Organizer Riviere, who, speaking for himself and Vice-President Gorman, declared, "We will not consider any compromise."

The strike had lasted four weeks, during which wages totalling \$2,000,000 had been lost, with neither side yielding the position first taken — the manufacturers adhering to the 10 per cent cut and the workers demanding that it be retracted. On November 1, however, the *Lawrence Sunday News* expressed the belief that the strike was lost and as it could not be won, suggested that the employes arrange to ballot by the Australian system to deter-

mine what they wished to do about returning to their work.
The article continued:

The 10 per cent cut has not been abolished. Mill owners state it will be effective upon the return of the employes and promise nothing. There is no middle ground upon which this strike can be settled and "idle mouthings" of radicals and paid organizers for varied unions will avail nothing. The strike is a situation which calls for cold, analytical mental processes totally devoid of all impulses and entirely apart from any ravings and rantings of labor leaders or red agitators. The naked facts are the entire country is in a slump financially and the way the strike leaders are sticking around Lawrence they know it and feel that it is a fertile field for them to pile up the dollars by bluffing the strikers.

Continuing depression, profitless business and a general world-wide financial sickness have brought the mills to the point, it appears, where wages must be cut. The *News* is not taking the stand that the statements of the mills are true, but holds that under the circumstances there is no other thing to do than assume that the mill heads are fair and honest.

It really comes down to this: Whom shall we place faith in, the mill men or the agitators? Are men with millions at stake taking chances on fooling the people in this day of intelligence and statistics? Nothing happened when the United States Steel Corporation, the foremost corporation in the world, cut wages 10 per cent. Nobody questioned the necessity of that procedure. Nobody kicked when the Bethlehem Steel followed suit.

Is it not true that Thomas McMahon, president of the United Textile Workers, who has been conspicuous by his absence from the local strike, counseled the return of workers in Maynard Mills who had been cut $12\frac{1}{2}$ per cent? Most labor men know that the world wage tendencies are downward and that the mill workers of Lawrence are no exception.

Now come agitators and promoters with alleged facts and figures. They tell the workers not to go back to work and try to keep on the strife.

It is a battle among unions for supremacy.

The strike would have been over two weeks ago when the mills opened their gates if people had been given the right protection. Thousands of workers were on those picket lines with lunches in the pockets ready to bolt the moment there was a chance. If there had been a movement in that direction the strike would have ended abruptly.

More than 90 per cent of the people out of work want to go back and they should be allowed to do so. They should not be hampered by those who do not want to go or who have no jobs to go to anyway.

Labor leaders should hang their heads in shame collecting 50 cents to join their union and 50 cents a month, holding out the thought that a hopeless cause can be won. Solicitors are out getting these half dollars from people hard pressed, to bolster up union incomes.

Common sense must prevail and it will prevail in the end.

The *Lawrence Sunday Sun*, whose editor has genuine sympathy for the workers, said in a leading article on the strike situation in part as follows:

The first thing to be ascertained by the workers is the fact that all over the world there has been a universal cut in wages. If it is a fact, then it is the duty of those who toil in our mills to find the true reason for this general cutting of wages. The great disciple of keeping wages high, Henry Ford, has now come to the conclusion that he, too, with all his millions, cannot carry on unless he cuts the wages of the Ford employes in Detroit.

For any person or persons to attempt at this time to belittle this situation, to urge the bucking of heads against stonewalls is a woeful affair — yes, it goes beyond that. . . .

It causes our hearts to bleed to think that there are many who are so unthinking, who are so insincere, who do not believe that which they are preaching at the present time, who are attempting to lead this array of men and women with right hearts in the wrong direction and against their better judgment.

We absolutely are of the opinion that at least two of the leaders of the present labor trouble that are acting in advisory capacities are absolutely of the opinion that this strike cannot be won by the workers. . . .

Does anybody believe that with the hundreds of mills idle, ready to receive orders, the employes right here in Lawrence with their advisors can battle this situation successfully? . . .

Does anybody believe that if it were humanely possible to continue mill activities without a cut that that great friend and neighbor of his employes, who in a way is a father to his employes in kindness and consideration, Nathaniel Stevens of North Andover, would have given the current cut to his help?

Why, it is preposterous to think of it. It is preposterous to believe and think that Nathaniel Stevens would think of hurting a hair on the head of a single employe or cutting his wages, unless he had to, to preserve in employment activity, the institutions presided over by him, the North Andover Mills and mills elsewhere, where employes have entered service in early age and have died in that service and when they wanted for care and attention, if their services were of no use to the concern, they were then taken care of and looked after.

Does anyone believe that a man of that stamp is going to cut

wages unless he is forced to do it by competition in order to have his mill institutions survive?

The *Lawrence Telegram* of November 4 contained a strong leading article, which, after referring to the spurt in the Lawrence mills in September, 1931, continued as follows:

A few weeks before the strike was called Lawrence was giving less aid to charities than any city in the State. To continue the busy employment situation the managers of the mills informed the public that because of increased competition the cost of production has to be lowered and they had in mind a 10 per cent reduction from the top to the bottom. But before notice of it was posted agitators got busy, if not from the angle of the Reds.

The people of Lawrence were happy when the Red element was dispersed because they believed that when dealing with those labor advisors connected with the American Federation of Labor they were dealing with men who had at heart not only the interests of the workers but of the community. They rejoiced that a disturbing element was not in the driver's seat, but those expected to give sane advice had the whip hand.

Today those who love Lawrence are wondering if they were right when they rejoiced in the change in sitting in the labor struggle as far as advisors were concerned.

To hear some of these labor advisors who have failed lamentably in other places, who have almost driven other communities upon the rocks of despair and destruction, one would believe that the mills were rolling in riches; that the spinning of yarn and the weaving of cloth in the textile manufacturing industries today was a source of great profit and great revenue and that the only reason for the cut in wages was the idea of some other one — no one mentioned — nothing definite — to be enriched.

Does anybody believe that there is any profit — real profit — in the worsted and woolen industries today? Let alone believe stories of labor advisors as to the huge sums of money that have been made in the Lawrence textile industry within the past few years?

Does anybody believe that if there was even a paying chance to make a mill like the Uswoco keep going that it would be put upon the auction block and sold for the ridiculously low sum of \$4,500 — the cost of the mill having been well over \$100,000?

There is an over-powering burden upon those who have the destiny of those mills upon their hands to keep them going and to meet the keen competition in the prices of cloth that they reduce the cost of production to exist under the pressure of competition.

On the evening of November 3, the Citizens Committee adopted resolutions, one of which stated that "the Committee

has now definitely arrived at the conclusion that the only way left to pass upon this momentous question is by a free expression from these workers who are directly involved." The Committee decided in favor of a ballot by means of a secret vote, which was in complete accord with the views of Governor Ely, and declared that employes desiring to resume work should be free to do so with the guaranty of adequate protection. Business and professional men favored a secret ballot vote as proposed by the Committee.

PLAN OF THE CITIZENS COMMITTEE DECRIED

At crowded mass meetings, however, leaders decried a secret vote, Vice-President Gorman being quoted as having declared that there could be no settlement by the method suggested, and as saying¹ that "there will be no settlement of this strike no matter what way the vote goes until the issue of wages has been determined."

Organizer Riviere, speaking at a meeting on the Common, stated that before any agreement would be made by the workers, three conditions must be made:

1. The decision that a ballot be taken must be made by the workers.
2. The ballot must be approved by the workers.
3. The ballots must be counted by the workers and no outsiders.

He added, "I think you are right in staying out against it. Your wages were too low before the cut was announced and I maintain the only solution of the textile situation is stabilization of the industry."

There were signs, however, that the workers wished to return and the first break took place on November 4 when about 250 reported for work at the M. T. Stevens Mills in North Andover, a majority having voted the previous night to declare the strike off. On November 3 the Monomac Mills sent ballots by mail to their employes, nearly 90 per cent voting to return, and more than half the force returned on November 5 under excellent police protection.

The vote proposed by the Citizens Committee, however, was not taken because the Committee could not interest officials of

¹ *Boston Globe*, November 5.

one of the large mills (the entire Pacific plant having been closed indefinitely) and because of Mr. Gorman's assertion that the ballot would be ignored.

By November 6, the United Textile Workers, the American Textile Workers Union, Inc., the Loom Fixers and Mule Spinners, it was announced, would agree to a city-wide poll on the secret ballot proposal of the Citizens Committee, provided the manufacturers would pledge their coöperation in effecting a fair poll.

On November 7, the Director of Public Safety announced that "all employes in the different mills desiring to work will be given proper police protection and there shall be no intimidation whatever. . . . Law and order are going to be maintained." In accordance with that notice all mills opened their gates the following Monday morning, except the Pacific. The next day, although strikers had been plainly told that there was no possibility of any concession by the manufacturers, Organizer Riviere was quoted as saying, "We are not beaten yet;" but a definite feeling existed among the strikers that their cause was hopeless and it was generally believed that a concerted movement to return to work awaits only a demonstration on Monday that those desiring to work under the cut "can do so safely."

Nevertheless, in a final effort to prevent a wholesale return to work on Monday morning, at mass meetings on the Common on November 8 strikers were exhorted to stand firm at any cost, to increase their opposition and refuse to return on any basis except the old wage.

In the papers of November 8, the labor leaders issued a statement in which they denounced the methods of the managers in New York and local employers to deal out starvation and misery in Lawrence and they declared that "all public statements of mill owners prove that they are deliberately gambling for supremacy, using the pocketbooks of the textile workers as their chips in the game, selling the employes' time below cost and then take the reduction out of the employes' pocketbooks."

Police Commissioner Carr was denounced for his statement and the Citizens Committee and the Civic League were adjured to "have done with this carefully engineered conspiracy to reduce the wages of the textile workers, abandon ballyhoo, face the facts, meet the workers and settle the problem."

The *Lawrence News* of November 8 stated that "tomorrow the workers will return to their jobs. The strike which seemed so impossible a situation two weeks ago is nearing its end. . . . Tomorrow the workers of Lawrence will show that they are unafraid."

An editorial in the same paper said:

The dream is ended. It is going to be a pretty tough job to explain why the people did not get all they were promised. . . . Go back to your jobs, workers. You have been bluffed long enough. . . . As for the leaders, let them toss up the sponge and hie themselves to some haunt where people are over-credulous and like to be lulled to sleep to the music of plenty of relief and good times coming if you pay your 50 cents down and 50 cents a month.

Monday morning, November 9, the strike which had lasted six weeks, which had been costly to the City of Lawrence and its business men, and in which \$2,500,000 in wages were lost, came to an end by the return of as many workers as the mills could employ at the time, strike leaders counseling the workers to be their own judges of the return to work.

Comments of the press both at the beginning and the close of the strike show that it did not have the support of public sentiment which counts so greatly in any industrial struggle.

The *Boston Evening Transcript* of October 7 said at the beginning of the strike:

Thousands of mill workers have abandoned their tasks rather than accept a reduction of 10 per cent in wages. In this case popular sentiment is not likely to be on the side of the strikers. With millions of unemployed in the country calling for emergency measures that they may be fed and provided with shelter, it runs counter to a sense of the fitness of things to see a group of twenty thousand workers in a single city voluntarily joining the army of the jobless.

When the strike ended, the *Transcript* again discussed it, saying:

It was hopeless for more than one reason. In the first place the mills would have been unable to operate at the old scale of wages. It was a choice between work at lower rates of pay and no work at all. Cooler heads among the operatives doubtless recognized this fact. In addition, the strikers had no chance of obtaining the sympathy of the public. The hope entertained at

the beginning of the business depression that wage scales might be undisturbed has not been fulfilled. The cutting of wages has been forced upon many industries. It came not as a matter of choice, but as a stern necessity. There was no apparent reason why the textile industry in Lawrence should or could be made an exception.

The pity of it is that a misguided and impetuous element among the operatives forced the strike in the first place. There is reason to believe that a great proportion of the workers went into it reluctantly. They sensed it as a mistake; now the mistake is admitted. . . . Thousands in Lawrence have paid dearly for six weeks of folly.

The *Boston News Bureau* commenting on "A Sorry Lesson" said:

A struggle that was pitifully futile from the outset has been lost by the thousands of Lawrence mill operatives with no possible compensation. . . . Some fractional gain by capital and labor in rival mill towns was the only net result. . . . The only possible outcome under all the circumstances was surrender. That was recognized by the more conservative union leaders who at last frankly told the strikers to make their own decision. . . . It was obviously not a whole-hearted strike from the beginning. This is no era for strikes and early November was no season for such a rebellion against the inevitable. That inevitability was evident from the fact that a continued effort to keep Lawrence immune and out of line would soon have meant a vacuum of no business and no work.